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July 17, 2003

Carl Pope, Executive Director  
Sierra Club  
85 Second Street  
Second Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3441

Dear Mr. Pope:

This is to ensure that you have appropriate information regarding legislation which I have introduced that will require the removal of the LeConte Memorial Lodge from Yosemite Valley. As you may be aware, I mentioned my interest in the removal during the April 22 field hearing of the National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands subcommittee which I chaired. I subsequently received a letter from your organization clarifying the Sierra Club's role with the Park Service in the operation of the Memorial Lodge.

The presence and operation of the LeConte Memorial Lodge is inconsistent with your organization's stated opposition to the rebuilding of Upper and Lower River Campgrounds. During the testimony provided by George Whitmore on behalf of your organization, he stated that the Sierra Club supports the Yosemite Valley Plan's direction to minimize the human footprint in the Valley. A part of that minimizing process includes not replacing the lost 350 campground spaces in Yosemite Valley, but instead to replace a portion of those accommodations in park locations outside the valley. This is justified on the basis of restoring the existing campground location to 'natural conditions.'

Certainly private special use permits, such as the permit for the LeConte Memorial Lodge, are not as important as public uses of park resources. At the same time that we reduce the human footprint and limit access to the Park for its many visitors, it becomes more and more difficult to provide the Sierra Club "special use" of a portion of the park's resources. If you are serious about reducing the human impact, you should remove the LeConte Memorial Lodge and restore that portion of Yosemite Valley to natural conditions. Any other position is nothing short of hypocritical.

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I have proposed the installation of a limited number of low-impact campsites set back from the Merced River on the existing Upper and Lower River Campground lands, providing much-needed public facilities. Any affect on the natural landscape for this public purpose could be offset by restoration of Sierra Club special use permit lands at the LeConte Memorial site.

Attached please find a copy of the legislation that I have introduced in this regard.

Please let me know if you have any questions in regard to this or any other matter.

Sincerely,



George Radanovich  
Member of Congress